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INTRODUCING: Cathy Jain, The Ultimate 'Cool Kid'

By Chloe van der Klauwe July 7, 2020 No Comments

As teenagers, many of us might dream of a career in music, but very few of us will already be well on our way to making it happen. Cathy Jain however, is an exception to this rule. At just seventeen she has already been gaining attention for her debut single *Cool Kid*. Written and produced from her own bedroom, the song takes inspiration from many different places, from R&B to Taylor Swift. We got to speak with the singer-songwriter about her influences, playing the gusheng and her goals for the future.

RC: Hi Cathy! You just released your debut single 'Cool Kid', what is the story behind its creation?

CJ: I wanted to write a song about how we tell stories to ourselves about who we are and how it's often difficult to tell whether you're being genuine or not, especially when you're with someone completely different to you. I sonically wanted the song to replicate a hazy summer afternoon so when I worked on it with my friend Rob (Heronsecrackedanalogue) we came up with this awesome wobbly synth vibe and it just took off from there.

RC: You're only seventeen and have been making music since you were nine, what attracted you to music in the first place and when did you know you wanted to make a career out of it?

CJ: I've loved music for as long as I can remember but the push to pick up the guitar and start writing songs came from Taylor Swift's Fearless tour. That was the first time that it occurred to me I could be a singer and I've never really wanted to do anything else. My mum and dad encouraged me early on to enjoy music. My Dad played a few chords and sang Yellow Submarine and my mum really encouraged me to learn instruments. Although my mind is a bit blown by what's happening right now, it feels perfectly natural to be spending all of my free time making music.

RC: Your music has hints of R&B and hip-hop influences, but you've also said you've been inspired by the likes of Taylor Swift: how did you find your sound and how do you blend such different influences?

CJ: I'm not sure I have found my sound yet, or maybe I've found a few sounds. The R&B and hip-hop influences come from the likes of Frank Ocean and Kehlani. I think growing up in two cultures (UK & China) and growing up with friends from different parts of the world meant that I've never been tied to one particular genre of music. I've always been open-minded about it – if a song is good it doesn't matter if it's by Drake or Nick Drake [laughs].

RC: *Cool Kid* was written and produced from your bedroom, how did you stay motivated and inspired during the pandemic? Do you think there were any positives about being forced to stay inside while making music?

CJ: Yeah, the first lockdown wasn't so bad. My GCSE exams were cancelled which took a huge amount of pressure away. Although I spent some time preparing for my college subjects it gave me more time to focus on music. With *Cool Kid* and a few other songs, I was working with Rob who lives in Goa, so we were already working remotely before the lockdown happened – we were way ahead of that trend haha! The only downside was that I was looking forward to a summer of performing. But my family and friends are all safe and healthy so overall, I can't complain about it.

RC: You've grown up in China, Australia and the UK: have any of these places influenced your music in different ways?

CJ: Absolutely. When I lived in China, as well as being exposed to traditional Chinese music through playing the gusheng, there was a huge amount of pop music. Evenings in China are very lively and there's always music playing in shops, restaurants and out in the street. K-pop and Canto-pop were hugely popular. Although I write a lot of low-tempo music, I like to bring some of the strong melodies and harmonies that you get in that kind of music. From the UK side, the music culture here is so deep and I love how much variety of music there is. I love hearing new sounds and ideas and thinking about how I could do something similar. Some of the songs that I have been working on recently have a kind of psychedelic vibe that you hear in a lot of English pop and rock music.

RC: You also play the gusheng, the Chinese harp, which you have included in your music as well. How did you first come up with the idea to incorporate it into your music and what attracted you to the instrument in the first place?

CJ: My mum loved the instrument and encouraged me to take it up. We were really lucky because there was a teacher living near us who was really good. She has played in front of presidents and royalty all over the world so it was amazing to have someone like that leading me. Traditional Chinese music is on the pentatonic scale so it doesn't naturally lend itself to pop music, but I love the sound and really enjoy using it when I can. There are quite a few beats out there that have samples from my gusheng that I recorded in a session last year, so maybe you'll hear more of it in the future!

RC: With normal life slowly coming back, what are you most looking forward to in the next months?

CJ: Obviously, I am looking forward to performing, but more than that I can't wait to go to a gig where I'm not performing! I've still never actually been to a proper gig where I wasn't on stage at some point. I was 15 when the first lockdown hit, and being in a small town, there's not much on the doorstep. I've got plans to see a few gigs around the country and I will watch a few of the bands before my slot at Latitude!

RC: Lastly, at just seventeen you've already achieved so much, what are your biggest hopes and goals for the future?

CJ: I have so many songs that I've written that I want people to hear, so at the moment I just want to keep writing and recording. When I dream about the future though, the idea of an audience singing my songs at a concert back to me is the one that really excites me. I hope that people can relate to my music and love it so much that they learn all the words and sing them with me. Maybe I could even inspire someone else to pick up a guitar and start writing songs, just like Taylor Swift did for me!

Cool Kid is out now.

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